

# RAW MILK

## UNPASTEURIZED MILK



### What is Raw Milk?

Raw milk is milk from cows, goats, sheep, or other animals that has not been pasteurized (heating to a temperature high enough to kill bacteria).

### What are the risks associated with drinking raw milk?

Raw milk can carry harmful bacteria and other germs that can make you very sick or even cause death. Bacteria commonly associated with raw milk include *Salmonella*, *Campylobacter* and *E. coli* O157. The rate of outbreaks caused by raw milk and products made from it was 150 times greater than outbreaks linked to pasteurized milk, according to a study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.\*

### Who is at greatest risk when drinking raw milk?

Anyone can get sick from drinking contaminated raw milk. However, the risk is greater for infants and young children, the elderly, pregnant women, and people with weakened immune systems. Children are particularly at danger of getting a potentially fatal kidney disease called Hemolytic Uremic Syndrome (HUS) if they get *E. coli* infection.

### How does milk get contaminated?

Milk can get contaminated by any of the following ways: coming into contact with cow feces, contact with bacteria living on the skin of cows, infection in the cow's udder, bacteria in the farm environment or on farm equipment, contact with insects, rodent or other animals and by humans mishandling the milk. Pasteurizing the milk is the only way to kill many of the harmful bacteria.

### Aren't raw or natural foods better than processed foods?

Many people believe that foods with no or minimal processing are better for their health. Many people also believe that small, local farms are better sources of healthy food. However, some types of processing are needed to protect health. For example, consumers process raw meat, poultry, and fish for safety by cooking. Similarly, when milk is pasteurized, it is heated just long enough to kill disease-causing germs. Most nutrients remain after milk is pasteurized. There are many local, small farms that offer pasteurized organic milk and cheese products.

### Does drinking raw milk prevent or cure any diseases, such as asthma, allergies, heart disease, or cancer?

No. Raw milk does not have any different health benefits than pasteurized milk. The process of pasteurization of milk has never been found to be the cause of chronic diseases, allergies, or developmental or behavioral problems.

### Does pasteurization affect the nutrient content of milk?

Research shows no meaningful difference between the nutrient content of pasteurized and unpasteurized milk.

### Does pasteurizing milk alter it in a fashion that can cause allergic reactions?

No. The milk proteins which cause allergic reactions in dairy-sensitive people are present in both raw milk and pasteurized milk.

### Can drinking pasteurized milk cause lactose intolerance?

No. Lactose intolerance is due to an insufficient production in the body of the enzyme needed to break down lactose, beta-galactosidase. Lactose is present in both raw milk and pasteurized milk at the same concentration. Pasteurization does not impact the concentration of lactose.

### I know people who have been drinking raw milk for years, and never got sick. Why is that?

The presence of germs in raw milk is unpredictable. The number of disease-causing germs in the raw milk may be too low to make a person sick for a long time, and later high enough to make the same person seriously ill. For some people, drinking contaminated raw milk just once could make them really sick. Even if you trust the farmer and your store, raw milk is never a guaranteed safe product. Drinking raw milk means taking a real risk of getting very sick.

### My farmer performs laboratory tests for bacteria in raw milk, so isn't it safe?

Even negative tests do not guarantee that raw milk is safe to drink. People have become very sick from drinking raw

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milk that came from farms that regularly tested their milk for bacteria and whose owners were sure that their milk was safe.

### **Is raw milk from grass-fed cows and goats safe?**

Illness outbreaks related to raw milk have been traced to both grass-fed and grain-fed animals.

### **Raw milk is organic, so isn't it safe?**

Raw milk is milk that has not been pasteurized, and it should not be confused with organic milk which is milk from cows that have been fed certified organic diets and have never been treated with antibiotics. Pasteurized organic milk is safe and is available in many places, including supermarkets, farmers' markets, and dairies.

### **Can I still get sick from raw milk if the cows or goats are healthy and if the dairy is careful and clean when collecting the milk?**

Yes. Even healthy animals can carry germs that contaminate milk. Milk can be contaminated with bacteria during the milk collection process. Small numbers of bacteria can multiply and grow in raw milk before consumption. Dairying methods have improved over the years but are still no substitute for pasteurization in assuring that milk is safe to drink. Raw milk supplied by "certified," "organic," or "local" dairies has no guarantee of being safe.

### **Are products made from raw milk unsafe?**

Other products made from raw milk, such as cheeses that are neither pasteurized nor aged, carry risks similar to raw milk.

## **Sources**

### **Food and Drug Administration (FDA):**

<http://www.fda.gov/Food/ResourcesForYou/consumers/ucm079516.htm>

### **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):**

<http://www.cdc.gov/foodsafety/rawmilk/raw-milk-index.html>

### **\*Press Release from the CDC:**

[http://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2012/p0221\\_raw\\_milk\\_outbreak.html](http://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2012/p0221_raw_milk_outbreak.html)



South Carolina Department of Health  
and Environmental Control